



Improving consumer communication during consultations for non-prescription medicines in community pharmacies

Researchers

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Aim

This project explored consumers' perceptions of non-prescription medicines (NPMs) and providing information to medicine counter assistants (MCAs) during consultations for NPMs.

Project Outline/Methodology

The study was conducted in two stages: interviews and a national survey. Both the interviews and survey were structured using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The TPB predicts when specific behaviour will occur and comprises the following constructs: intention (to behave in a specific way), attitudes (behavioural beliefs and outcome evaluations (whether the outcome of the behaviour will be good or bad)), subjective norms (normative beliefs (what other people think about the behaviour)) and motivation to comply (whether what other people think motivates the individual to comply) and, perceived behavioural control (PBC) (control beliefs ie. facilitators and barriers).

Interviews were conducted with consumers who had purchased a NPM from a participating community pharmacy (n=9). The interviews explored their beliefs and attitudes regarding two behaviours: buying NPMs and giving information to MCAs during these consultations. The results of the interviews were used to develop a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to quantify the frequency with which the TPB variables identified in the interviews were held by the general population, as well as to identify TPB variables that could predict intention to buy/give information and self-reported buying/giving information. Two versions of the questionnaire were used and sent to a total of 3000 recipients.

Key Results

Thirty consumers were interviewed. The total response rate across both questionnaires was 32.7% (955/2924). The common sections and items in both versions of the questionnaire were combined and analysed together. Buying NPMs: The results showed

that intention to buy a NPM in general was driven by attitude toward the behaviour. Giving Information: The results demonstrated that intention to give information to MCAs was driven by subjective norm and perceived control over the behaviour and not by attitude towards the behaviour. People who reported giving information to MCAs while purchasing NPMs had stronger intentions to give information. They also reported stronger pressure to conform to the views of others who were in favour of giving information, but this view related to their actual behaviour via their intentions.

Conclusions

Consumers had positive beliefs, attitudes, perceptions of control and intentions towards the purchase of NPMs and the provision of information during consultations for these medicines. Future interventions to promote information giving to MCAs during consultations for NPMs should include making the giving of information easier and providing encouragement to believe that important others, e.g. such as doctors and pharmacists, would think this advisable.

What does this study add to the field?

This is the first theory-based study to explore specific cognitions associated with buying NPMs and giving information to NPMs.

Implications for Practice or Policy

The results will inform the development and evaluation of interventions to target the cognitions demonstrated to be associated with the behaviours (and intentions) measured in this study.

Where to next?

Further analysis is required to identify additional influences on the behaviours of interest, including the effect of indirect measures of TPB, demographic characteristics, and risk perceptions.

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